

Attracting Visitors by Passenger Rail to Franklin County, MA



Prepared by the
Franklin Regional Council of Governments,
September 2017

Attracting Visitors by Passenger Rail to Franklin County, MA

September 30, 2017

Prepared by:
Franklin Regional Council of Governments
12 Olive Street, Suite 2
Greenfield, MA 01301
Main Telephone: 413-774-3167
Fax: 413-774-3169
www.frcog.org

Transportation Planning Staff:

Jessica Atwood, Economic Development Program Manager
Ryan Clary, Senior GIS Specialist
Elizabeth Giannini, Senior Transportation Planner II
Alyssa Larose, Land Use Planner
Jessica McMillin, Public Health and Transportation Planner
Maureen Mullaney, Transportation & GIS Program Manager II
Megan Rhodes, Senior Transportation Planner
Laurie Scarbrough, Transportation Planning Engineer
Margaret Sloan, Director of Planning & Development



Prepared under Contract #95427 in cooperation with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the U.S. Department of Transportation, and the Federal Highway Administration.

Notice of Nondiscrimination Rights and Protections to Beneficiaries

Federal "Title VI/Nondiscrimination" Protections

The Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) operates its programs, services, and activities in compliance with federal nondiscrimination laws including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, and related statutes and regulations. Title VI prohibits discrimination in federally assisted programs and requires that no person in the United States of America shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin (including limited English proficiency), be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal assistance. Related federal nondiscrimination laws administered by the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, or both prohibit discrimination on the basis of age, sex, and disability. These protected categories are contemplated within FRCOG's Title VI Programs consistent with federal interpretation and administration. Additionally, FRCOG provides meaningful access to its programs, services, and activities to individuals with limited English proficiency, in compliance with U.S. Department of Transportation policy and guidance on federal Executive Order 13166.

State Nondiscrimination Protections

FRCOG also complies with the Massachusetts Public Accommodation Law, M.G.L c 272 §§ 92a, 98, 98a, prohibiting making any distinction, discrimination, or restriction in admission to or treatment in a place of public accommodation based on race, color, religious creed, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, or ancestry. Likewise, FRCOG complies with the Governor's Executive Order 526, section 4 requiring all programs, activities, and services provided, performed, licensed, chartered, funded, regulated, or contracted for by the state shall be conducted without unlawful discrimination based on race, color, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, creed, ancestry, national origin, disability, veteran's status (including Vietnam-era veterans), or background.

If you need help understanding this document because you do not speak English or have a disability which impacts your ability to read the text, please contact FRCOG's Title VI Specialist at (413) 774-3167 (voice) (MA Relay System: 800-439-2370), 413-774-3169 (fax), or mrhodes@frcog.org (e-mail).

If you believe that you or anyone in a specific class of persons has been subjected to discrimination prohibited by Title VI and other nondiscrimination laws based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, or gender, you or your representative may file a complaint with the FRCOG, which we can help complete. A complaint must be filed no later than 180 days after the date of the alleged discrimination. If you require further information, please contact FRCOG's Title VI Specialist at (413) 774-3167 (voice) (MA Relay System: 800-439-2370), 413-774-3169 (fax), or civilrights@frcog.org (e-mail).

English: If this information is needed in another language, please contact the FRCOG Title VI Specialist at (413) 774-3167.

Spanish: Si necesita esta información en otro idioma, por favor contacte al Especialista de FRCOG del Título VI al (413)774-3167.

Russian: Если Вам необходима данная информация на любом другом языке, пожалуйста, свяжитесь со специалистом по Титулу VI FRCOG по тел: (413) 774-3167.

Attracting Visitors by Passenger Rail to Franklin County, MA

Table of Contents

Overview	1
The Return of Passenger Rail & Current Connections	1
<i>Comparison of Vermonter Stops</i>	3
Trends in Tourism.....	5
<i>Millennials and Baby Boomers</i>	6
<i>Franklin County Tourism</i>	7
Train-Based Tourism Programs	9
<i>Amtrak's Downeaster</i>	9
<i>Vermont by Rail</i>	11
<i>Ski Santa Fe</i>	12
<i>Trails & Rails Program</i>	13
Promotion of the Vermonter Route & Greenfield Station	16
<i>Current Promotion by Amtrak</i>	16
<i>Transporting Bicycles and Skis to the Greenfield Station</i>	19
<i>MassVacation.com Promotion of Rail Travel</i>	20
<i>Local Promotion of Rail Travel</i>	21
Findings	25
Recommendations	28
Appendix	30
<i>Amtrak fact sheet: Vermonter Service</i>	31
<i>Amtrak service in Greenfield, MA</i>	32
<i>FRCOG's Greenfield Station Platform Poster</i>	33

Overview

On December 29, 2014, passenger rail service returned to Greenfield, Massachusetts for the first time in twenty-five years. With this new service, Amtrak's Vermonter train offers daily service north to St. Albans, Vermont and south to Washington DC, with stops in Springfield, New York City, and Philadelphia along the way. At the same time the Greenfield stop was reinstated, a new stop was added in Northampton and then later in Holyoke in August 2015. In total, the Vermonter offers daily stops in 33 cities located in nine states and Washington DC.

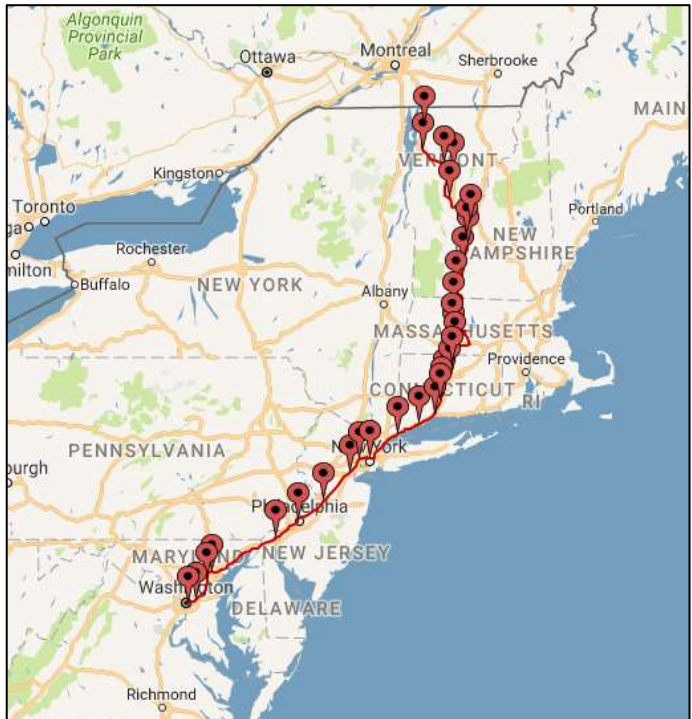
The return of passenger rail service in Greenfield offers a new transportation option for local residents to visit major metropolitan areas for work or leisure. It also offers a new transportation option for tourists from these metropolitan areas and other stops on the route to visit Greenfield and the surrounding area. How best can the greater Greenfield area leverage this new transportation mode to encourage more tourism? This study reviews the current status of passenger rail service and tourism infrastructure in the region, compares it to services offered in other areas, and presents recommendations to encourage greater use of the Vermonter service to attract visitors.

The Return of Passenger Rail & Current Connections

As described in the 2016 Franklin County Long Range Regional Transportation Plan¹, passenger rail service in western Massachusetts historically traveled north-south along the Connecticut River Main Line, which roughly parallels Interstate 91 and the Connecticut River. In the 1980s, Amtrak relocated a segment of this service away from this line due to poor track conditions. The train was re-routed from Springfield to

Figure 1: Map of Vermonter Route

Source: Amtrak.com/Vermont-train; Google Maps.



¹ 2016 Franklin County Regional Transportation Plan, FRCOG, 2016.

Palmer before stopping in Amherst and then Brattleboro. This detour increased travel time and removed stops in Greenfield, Northampton, and Holyoke. Track improvements funded by federal and state investments allowed for the service to return by improving Connecticut River Main Line conditions and constructing new platforms in Holyoke, Northampton and Greenfield. As a result, the detour to Palmer and the stop in Amherst were discontinued. The on-going operation of Amtrak's Vermonter service is subsidized by the states of Vermont, Massachusetts and Connecticut.

According to Amtrak data², 5,885 passengers used the Greenfield station in 2016, which was an 11% increase from the first full year of operation in 2015. This increase from 2015 to 2016 happened at the same time there was an overall decrease of -4% of passengers using the Vermonter route. Amtrak provides data on the most active trips along the Vermonter route. They are referred to as "city pairs"; these are the busiest trips connecting two stops served by the Vermonter. Of the top ten city pairs by ridership for the Vermonter route in 2016, the trip from Greenfield to New York City was the sixth busiest trip. From its launch in 2014 through 2016, adjustments have been made to the schedule to improve the on-time performance of the route, which may have encouraged greater use of the service.

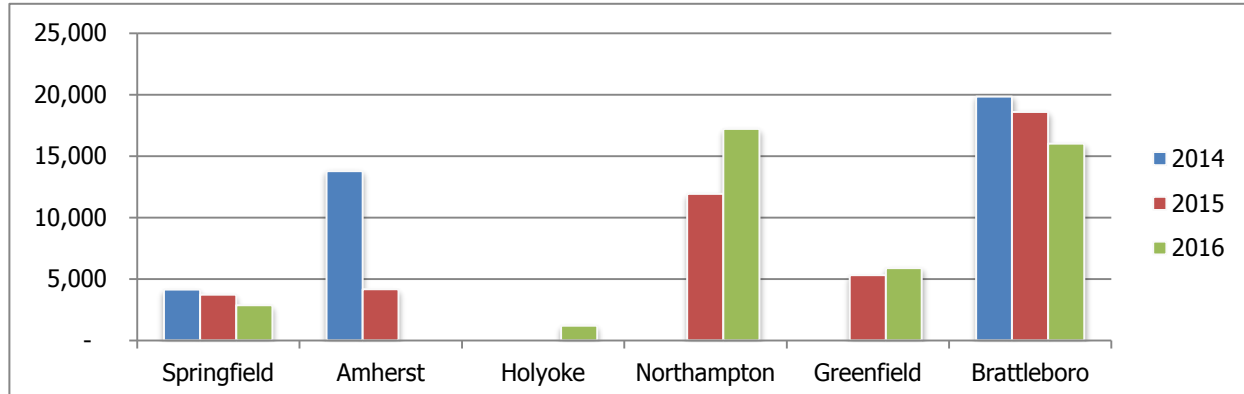
Moving forward, there is great interest in adding trains so that it would be possible for someone to travel from Greenfield to New York City and back in a single day. The FRCOG, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, local officials, and other organizations are advocating for additional trains to serve Greenfield, Northampton, Holyoke, and Springfield stations.

In the past, travelers coming to or from Franklin and Hampshire Counties by rail would have likely used the Springfield, Amherst, or Brattleboro stations. From 2015 to 2016, a decline in the number of passengers is seen at the Springfield and Brattleboro stations. This decline is likely the result of the new scheduled service in Greenfield and Northampton at the beginning of 2015 and in Holyoke later that year. It is also assumed that passengers, who would have used the discontinued Amherst station, now use the Northampton station.

² Source: National Association of Railroad Passengers, "Amtrak fact sheet: Vermonter service", 2017. <https://www.narprail.org/site/assets/files/1996/qfd.pdf>.

Chart 1: Annual Number of Vermonter Passengers by Station.*

Source: Amtrak Fact Sheet: Vermonter, 2017



*The Amherst station was not operational in 2016, and the Holyoke station was not operational for the full year of 2015.

Daily service on the Vermonter is accessed at the platform located at the John W. Olver Transit Center at 12 Olive Street in downtown Greenfield. The northbound train arrives in Greenfield at 4:22 pm, and leaves southbound at 1:36 pm. The cost for a roundtrip from New York City to Greenfield ranges from \$82 to \$192, depending on availability of seats and when the tickets are purchased. According to Amtrak.com, the current trip from Greenfield to New York City takes 4 hours and 49 minutes, which includes time to change trains in Springfield. In comparison, the time to drive to and from Greenfield and New York City ranges from 3 hours 10 minutes to 5 hours 10 minutes depending on traffic conditions, according to Google Maps.

**Greenfield Station
Arrivals/Departures**

Northbound daily at 4:22 pm
Southbound daily at 1:36 pm

As improvements have been made to the Connecticut River Main Line tracks in Massachusetts, significant investments are being made to improve the rail infrastructure in Connecticut from New Haven to Springfield, MA. In addition to these improvements, 17 more trains connecting New Haven and Springfield per day is scheduled to begin in 2018. These improvements and expanded service will enhance the efficiency of the Vermonter service and offer more options to travelers.

[Comparison of Vermonter Stops](#)

The Amtrak Fact Sheet for the Vermonter lists the top ten city pairs by ridership (i.e. the busiest trips) in 2016. Of these pairs, the top destinations from New York City on the Vermonter route were: Northampton, MA; White River Junction, VT and Waterbury-Stowe, VT. As indicated, the top destinations for passengers from New York City are not

other urban areas. Each of these small communities has attractions and amenities that appeal to visitors traveling from a metropolitan area. A description of these communities and the activity of their respective stops are provided. For comparison purposes, the Town of Greenfield had a 2010 population of about 17,500, and had a Vermonter ridership of 5,885 people in 2016.

The City of Northampton is known as a hub for arts and culture, and is home to Smith College and close to other prominent higher education institutions like Amherst College and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. While the Northampton stop was launched at the same time as Greenfield, it has a population twice the size and had nearly three times the ridership in 2016.³ With the return of the Vermonter service to the Connecticut Main Line tracks, passenger rail service in Amherst was discontinued. It is assumed most passengers who had previously used the Amherst station now use the Northampton station. In 2014, the last full year of service, the Amherst station had a ridership of 13,780.⁴ Even with the absorption of the Amherst station's ridership, the Northampton station has shown substantial growth.

White River Junction in Vermont was once named one of the 10 Coolest Small Towns in America by Budget Travel magazine because of its unique attractions, such as the Main Street Museum, the Center for Cartoon Studies, and the King Arthur Flour Baking School. Technically, White River Junction is a village in the Town of Hartford, VT, which had a population of 9,952 in 2010. Close to the town is Dartmouth College, which has an enrollment of approximately 6,300 students. According to the Dartmouth College website, this stop is about five miles, or a ten minute drive to campus. In 2016, there were twice the number of riders using the White River Junction stop than the Greenfield stop.⁵

The Waterbury-Stowe area is famous for its ski resorts and other tourist attractions, such as the Stowe Mountain Resort and the home of Ben & Jerry's. The Waterbury-Stowe stop is located in the village center of Waterbury but not in walking distance to major attractions and services. For example, it would require separate transportation to travel from the Waterbury-Stowe station to the resorts in neighboring Stowe. In 2010, Waterbury had a population of about 5,000 and Stowe had a population of 4,300. The combined population of these communities is over half the size of Greenfield. In 2016, the Vermonter ridership for this stop was slightly less than Greenfield's ridership.⁶

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

The stations at Northampton, White River Junction, and Waterbury-Stowe are top destinations for riders from New York City on the Vermonter route. Common traits among these stations are being located in a downtown or village center with visitor amenities within walking distance or close to higher education institutions or very well-known tourist attractions. While the greater Greenfield area does not currently have institutions or attractions of equivalent size or as broadly known, it does have significant assets that could be promoted to this tourism market. Ensuring a clear understanding of what these assets are and establishing an easy connection to them from the Greenfield station is essential in promoting this area to visitors.

Trends in Tourism

According to the U.S. Travel Association, domestic leisure travel increased 1.7% from 2015 to 2016 and accounted for 79% of all domestic travel.⁷ Leisure travel includes traveling to visit friends and relatives, entertainment and sightseeing, outdoor recreation and other personal purposes, but does not include travel for business. The decrease in gas prices and the continued recovery from the Great Recession are considered factors for the increase in domestic travel over the past few years.

According to the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism's (MOTT) Annual Report⁸, there were 22.6 million domestic visitors to the Commonwealth in 2015. Of these domestic visitors, 58% came from other parts of New England and 18% came from the mid-Atlantic area (which includes New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania). The mode for visitors getting here was mostly by driving their own vehicle (70%) and by air transport (17%), followed by rental car (3.1%), train (2.7%) and bus (2.3%).

The MOTT Annual Report includes data about the amount of money spent by domestic visitors by county. In Franklin County, there was \$60 million in expenditures by domestic visitors in 2015, and \$17.4 billion statewide.

What was the primary purpose of the trip?

The MOTT 2015 Annual Report identified the top reasons domestic travelers visited Massachusetts.

- Visiting friends or relatives (50%)
- Other pleasure/personal (16%)
- Entertainment/sightseeing (12%)
- Personal business (6%)
- Outdoor recreation (4%)
- Other/No answer (12%)

⁷ U.S. Travel and Tourism Overview. U.S. Travel Association, 2016. <https://www.ustravel.org/research>

⁸ Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism, 2015 Annual Report, March 2016. <http://www.massvacation.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/2015-annual-report-9-27-16.pdf>

Millennials and Baby Boomers

A recent study by the American Public Transportation Association (APTC) examined how people in the Millennial generation (people born between 1982 – 2003) consider their commuting options.⁹ This study focused on the Millennial generation's decision-making process to determine how to meet their daily travel needs. While this study does not focus exclusively on leisure travel, it provides insight on this generation's general view about transportation.

A key finding from the study concludes that this generation is more flexible in considering their transportation options. They want to use the transportation mode that makes the most sense for the trip they are taking. Another finding from the study is that Millennials want digital tools, such as real-time trip updates or the ability to purchase fares through a smartphone application, to ensure easy access to information and simplified transactions. Using digital tools allow travelers to be responsive to changing conditions and be more spontaneous, which traditionally has been the advantage of traveling by car.

While this study focused on transportation modes for regular commuting, the findings and recommendations may also be applied to Millennials seeking to travel for leisure. Millennials living in urban centers along the Vermonter corridor may be interested in travel opportunities that use intercity train service if it can be viewed as easy and convenient to do. Recommendations from the APTC study include integrating messaging and digital tools with the interests of Millennials. The study suggests creating tools that offer "features and partnership that include both tactical information and content/tools/games that deliver on the thing they are already looking for."¹⁰ It also suggests that systems that allow the traveler to access useful information in an entertaining way will be an advantage in attracting Millennials.

Looking at travelers in the Baby Boom generation (people born between 1946 – 1964), the AARP conducts research on this age cohort to create an annual travel forecast. They report that most Baby Boomers will take at least one leisure trip in 2017. Of those traveling, they expect 51% will only travel domestically with another 43% expecting to travel both domestically and internationally.¹¹ This report stated that Baby Boomers are not avid users of online resources for travel planning and booking, as compared to

⁹ American Public Transportation Association, *2013 Millennials & Mobility: Understanding the Millennial Mindset*. <http://www.apta.com/resources/reportsandpublications/Documents/APTA-Millennials-and-Mobility.pdf>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ AARP Travel Research: 2017 Travel Trends, November 2016. <http://www.aarp.org/research/topics/life/info-2016/2017-travel-trends.html>

younger generations. It also stated that 41% of these travelers will book online at the website of the airline, hotel or car rental website, which is likely due to these companies having their own customer loyalty program. The report also stated that most travelers in this age cohort are looking for “a laid back and relaxing trip to give them the opportunity to spend quality time with friends and family” and that a top barrier for them to travel more is cost.¹²

A 2013 study by the Transamerica Center for Retirement Studies and the Global Coalition on Aging highlighted the physical, cognitive and social benefits of travel for people in retirement. The study findings concluded that travel experiences are thought to be good for stress reduction and personal happiness. The study also found that a big regret by some retirees was not saving enough for travel.¹³

For younger and older age cohorts, domestic leisure travel to western Massachusetts by passenger rail can be appealing option. Current marketing and advertising efforts do an excellent job of featuring the regions assets, such as its cultural attractions and events as well as its outdoor recreation. For example, Cider Days is a festival held in early November that attracts visitors from across the country. The region is also known for its whitewater rafting and adventure-based recreation. Assets such as these are relatively affordable to participate in and are appealing to a broad range of people. Further efforts could be undertaken to enhance how visitors traveling by rail can access these opportunities. If this could be done in an entertaining as well as an informative way, it could further enhance the region as a prospective rail destination.

Franklin County Tourism

According to the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, the typical profile of a visitor to this area of western Massachusetts is one who enjoys history, the arts, and outdoor recreation. Throughout the year there are concerts, theater productions, fairs and festivals, skiing, rafting, biking, triathlons, and other niche markets that attract visitors during the four seasons. Art and history museums, major entertainment venues, and the higher educational institutions are attractions that bring domestic and international visitors to the region. In particular, major marketing by the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce and the other two Regional Tourism Councils (RTCs) serving this area (the Mohawk Trail Association and North Quabbin Chamber of Commerce) is mostly directed to the metropolitan New York market. The traditional tourism customer base for this

¹² Ibid.

¹³ U.S. Travel Association, Destination Healthy Aging, November 2013.

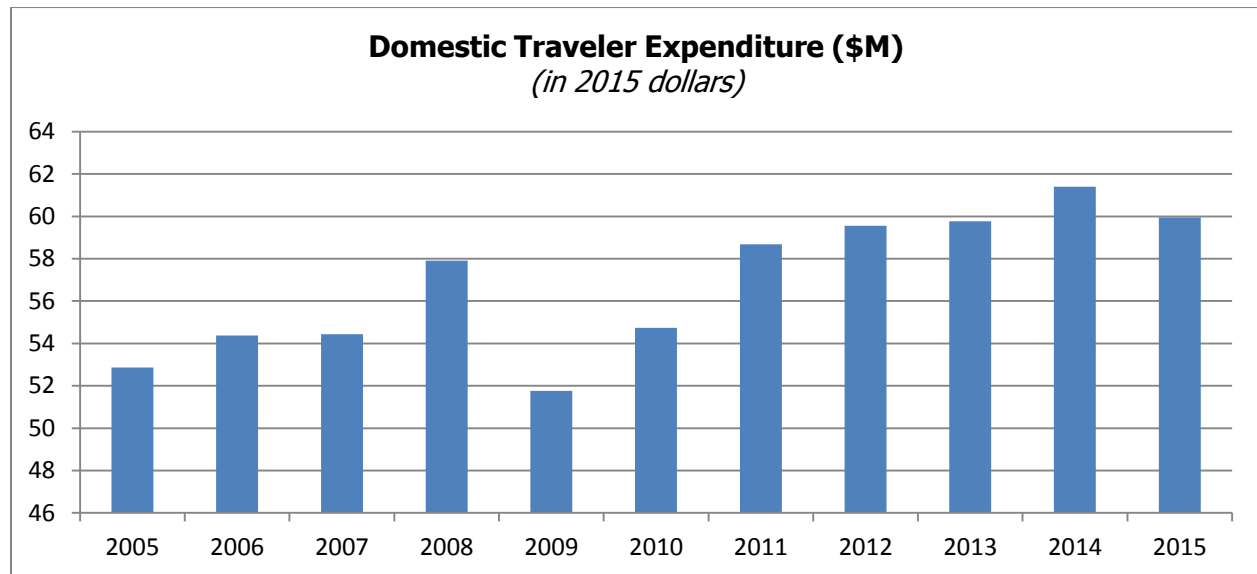
<https://www.ustravel.org/research/destination-healthy-aging-physical-cognitive-and-social-benefits-travel>

region is from metropolitan New York, New Haven and Hartford, which are all stops along the Vermonter route.

As mentioned previously in MOTT's Domestic Travel Impact report, nearly \$60 million in expenditures were made in Franklin County by travelers to the region in 2015.¹⁴ This amount includes over \$5.3 million generated through state and local tax receipts. The three counties of the Pioneer Valley had domestic traveler expenditures of over \$677 million, and statewide the level of expenditures was \$17.4 billion. In comparison to the broader area and the state, the expenditure in Franklin County is quite low. However, the tourism industry in Franklin County has experienced growth that has exceeded pre-recession years (see following chart).

Chart 2: Domestic Traveler Expenditures in Franklin County

Source: Mass. Office of Travel and Tourism, Economic Impact on Massachusetts Counties, 2015; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Inflation Calculator.



There are multiple benefits for growing the local tourism industry. This industry leverages the region's existing natural and cultural resources for economic purposes in a way that encourages their sustainable use and protection. The amenities developed to attract visitors are also a benefit to residents, and may serve to attract more people and prospective employers to the region. For a region like Franklin County that is experiencing no significant population growth, a quality of life that is enticing to visitors may also attract new residents and grow businesses.

¹⁴ The Economic Impact of Travel on Massachusetts Counties, 2015. Research by the U.S. Travel Association. Study prepared for the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism. September 2016. <http://www.massvacation.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2015-counties-report.pdf>

Often visitors to the region are here for a day trip or a stop-over on the way to another location. There is great interest in encouraging visitors to stay longer. The current train schedule requires an overnight stay in the region but does not allow for much time for activities. With only one train per day, a traveler coming from the south to Greenfield would arrive at 4:22 pm, and would have to depart by mid-afternoon the following day. Instead, it is likely most visitors traveling by rail would want to stay at least two nights to allow for sufficient time to explore and enjoy the region. If the tourism industry in the region encourages greater use of the Vermonter, it will likely result in more two-night stays by travelers and an increase in tourism spending overall.

In addition to increased expenditures and tax revenues, an increase in the volume of travelers visiting the region by the Vermonter would result in additional public benefits. It ensures that there is an economic return on the federal and state investments made in infrastructure. Greater use of the Vermonter may encourage additional investment to expand service offerings or may reduce the amount of overall operating subsidy needed for the service by the contributing states. Also, by encouraging visitors to take the train, as opposed to taking their own vehicles, it helps reduce the negative impacts associated with traffic congestion.

Train-Based Tourism Programs

There are examples of programs that have successfully encouraged visitors from major metropolitan areas to take intercity passenger rail to connect to rural communities. This report reviews examples of passenger rail services that connect urban travelers to rural areas. For two of these programs, leadership is provided by the state's tourism agency. For one program, it is the public regional transit authorities that have created the link between the city and rural amenities. The last program described is coordinated by the National Park Service to cross promote their recreational assets to rail travelers.

Examples of Passenger Rail based Tourism

- Amtrak's Downeaster
- Vermont by Rail
- Ski Sante Fe
- Trails & Rails Program

Amtrak's Downeaster

The Amtrak's Downeaster route connects Boston to three stations in New Hampshire and six stations in coastal Maine. There are five trips daily between Boston and Portland which, according to the Amtrak's Fact Sheet for this route, is the top city pair by

ridership (i.e. the busiest trip connecting the two stops) for this route.¹⁵ To promote this service, the Amtrak webpage for the Downeaster states “Start planning your car-free adventure today”¹⁶ and links to www.AmtrakDowneaster.com. This website is managed by the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA), a public transportation authority created by the State of Maine for the purpose of providing and promoting passenger rail service between Boston and Maine.

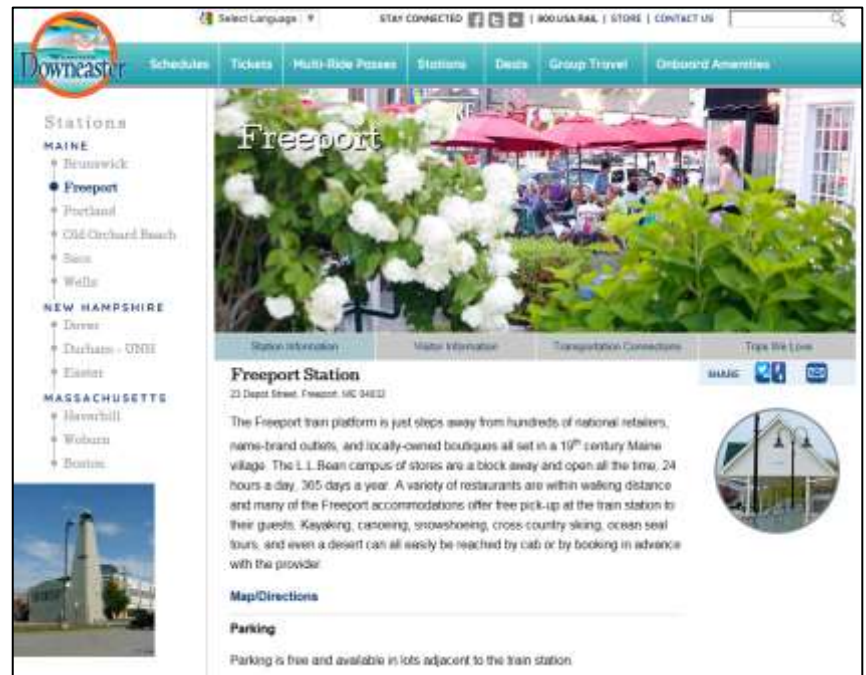
AmtrakDowneaster.com provides the route schedule, ticket purchasing, and station information similar to the traditional Amtrak website. However, AmtrakDowneaster.com also provides more in depth information for each rail station and community than the traditional Amtrak website.

Each station’s webpage features the following information:

- Station Information - includes where to park and if on site ticketing is available.
- Visitor Information - includes links to featured attractions in the community.
- Transportation Connections – includes bus, taxi, car rentals, bike rentals, and other transport options.

Image 2: Image from the Amtrak Downeaster website

Source: www.amtrakdowneaster.com/station/freeport



- Trips We Love – includes dining and experience recommendations with guidance on if these places are in walking distance or require other transportation.

AmtrakDowneaster.com also offers easy to find information about the Amtrak service, such as how to travel with pets or bicycles with its Onboard Amenities tab, or how to coordinate a school trip through its Downeaster Discovery Field Trip Program. In addition to managing an informational website, NNEPRA has coordinated other efforts,

¹⁵ ¹⁵ Source: National Association of Railroad Passengers, “Amtrak fact sheet: Downeaster service”, 2017. <https://www.narprail.org/site/assets/files/3476/9.pdf>.

¹⁶ Webpage: <https://www.amtrak.com/downeaster-train>

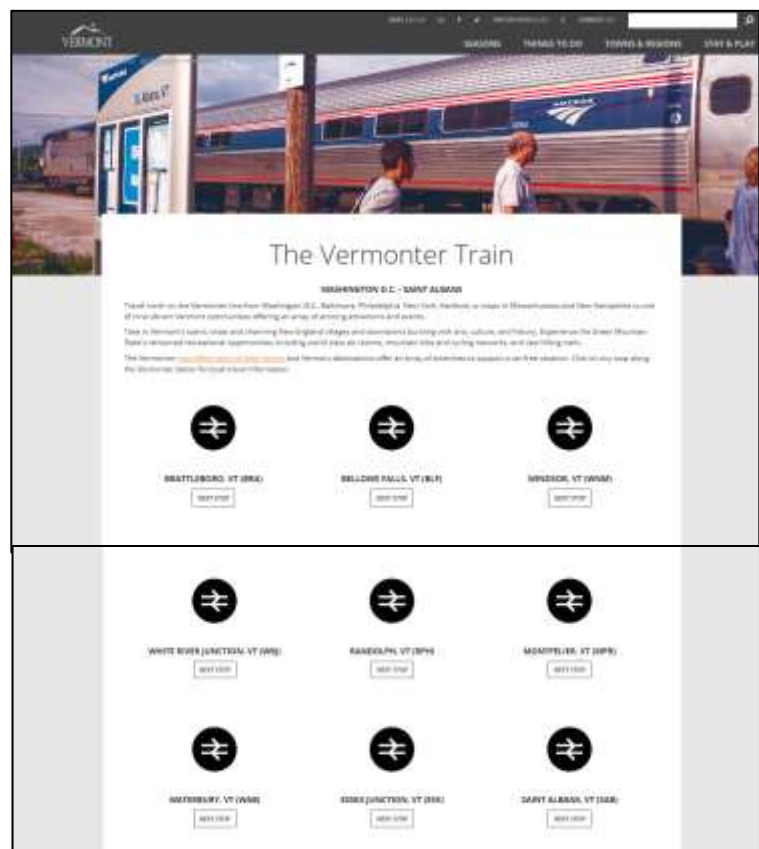
such as having locally made food and beverages offered in the train café. In addition, NNEPRA has connected with a travel services company that offers Downeaster-based travel packages through a separate website. The DowneasterPackages.com website features tour packages that combine dining, lodging and/or experiences that can be accessed by taking the train. These tour packages are organized by the private travel company called North American Traveler, which specializes in creating customized travel packages for specific areas.

For the most part, AmtrakDowneaster.com has the same information found on the traditional Amtrak website, but it is re-organized and combined with location-specific information. It is organized in a way the targeted audience can find easy to navigate. The addition of locally produced food and beverage offerings, and having a private company coordinate tour packages, contributes to creating a fun atmosphere and makes trip planning very easy.

[Vermont by Rail](#)

The State of Vermont's Department of Tourism and Marketing (VDTM) administers the www.VermontVacation.com website, which has a "Getting Here" section dedicated to traveling to Vermont, including by passenger rail. As part of their "Getting Here" information, they feature both the Ethan Allen Express or Vermonter trains with their own webpages and links to information about each stop. A link is provided for travelers to receive a 20% discount on Amtrak fares to come to Vermont via the Ethan Allen Express or Vermonter trains. A 15% discount is offered on fares when traveling between Vermont stations. The tickets themselves are purchased online through the Amtrak.com website.

Image 3: Information about Vermont Train Stations Towns. Source: www.vermontvacation.com/landing-pages/travel-resources/getting-here/the-vermonter



The VermontVacation.com website also includes webpages for each rail station on the Vermonter and Ethan Allen Express routes. These webpages describes the community, lists attractions with their distance from the station, lodging, and local transportation options as available, like a taxi, fixed bus service, or shuttle service. Each station webpage also links to a community webpage on the VermontVacation.com website.

The community webpages provide a general description of the community, links to local visitor services, and suggests unique travel itineraries. As an example, a local chamber of commerce or tourist office may recommend a walking tour of the historic downtown. Other suggested itineraries may require the visitor to have access to a car. Most of the driving itineraries have been developed by VDTM or by industry groups, like the Vermont Grape and Wine Council, the Vermont Cheese Council, and the Vermont Brewers Association. Links are provided to allow the visitor to explore on their own using downloadable guides and maps produced by VDTM, industry groups websites with trail information, or very simple themed Google Maps populated with points of interest, like the location of covered bridges.

A popular reason for tourists to visit to Vermont is to access outdoor recreation, particularly for the winter ski season. To help facilitate the connection from the passenger rail to the ski slopes, some resorts provide private shuttle services. For example, the webpage for the Rutland rail station, which is served by the Ethan Allan Express, includes a link to a private shuttle service called Gramps Shuttle. With a reservation, Gramps Shuttle service will pick up and drop off visitors from select Amtrak stops and the Burlington Airport to major ski resorts like Killington, Okemo, and Stratton/Bromley Mountain. Another example of a private shuttle is operated by the Okemo Mountain resort. They have an Express Shuttle service that will pick up or drop off visitors at the Rutland and Bellows Falls rail stations.

The VermontVacation.com website provides both useful basic information (i.e. fare discounts, local transportation options) as well as unique itineraries to peak the interest of prospective travelers. The information provided demonstrates a coordinated effort to ease the rail traveler's experience connecting to destinations, whether they are in walking distance or require additional transportation.

[Ski Santa Fe](#)

Two public transportation authorities have coordinated their services to allow residents and visitors from the Albuquerque metropolitan area to connect outdoor recreation opportunities in northern New Mexico. The Rio Metro Transit District (RMTD) is a public

transit authority that operates a bus and rail system in the three-county area that includes Albuquerque and Sante Fe, NM. The North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) is a public transportation authority that provides free and fare-based bus services to communities in pueblos and four counties in northern New Mexico.

The RMTD's passenger rail service is called the New Mexico Rail Runner Express which connects to the NCRTD's 255 Mountain Trail bus service in Sante Fe. The 255 Mountain Trail offers year-round service to the Ski Sante Fe resort located in the Sante Fe National Forest. Both the train and the bus can accommodate bicycles and skis. The fare for the 255 Mountain Trail to Ski Sante Fe is \$5, but riders are given a token worth \$5 to spend at the resort.

Image 4: Logo for the Mount Trail route.

Source: <http://www.ncrtd.org/rtd-mountain-trail.aspx>



Supporting access from the metropolitan area to the outdoor recreation opportunities required two transportation service providers to work cooperatively. By utilizing the intercity rail system, more people can access the Ski Sante Fe resort and the Sante Fe National Forest. This connection can result in more people visiting the ski area and outdoor recreation spots, and in such a way that does not require a car.

Trails & Rails Program

The National Park Service has partnered with Amtrak to create a program to engage passenger rail riders about National Parks. The program has materials to educate travelers on the cultural heritage and natural resources found in parks found along their route. There are thirteen Amtrak routes that are part of this program. Only two Amtrak routes in the northeast participate. They are The Adirondack, which goes from New York City to Montreal, and the Northeast Regional, which goes from Washington DC to New York City. For participating Amtrak routes, there are scheduled dates for when volunteer guides are on board to provide information about National Parks found along the route to interested passengers. For example, The Adirondack route has scheduled May 20 and October 29, 2017 for programs about the National Parks of the New York Harbor, the Roosevelt-

Image 5: Trials & Rails Program Logo.

Source: Amtrak.com



Vanderbilt Mansion Historic Site, and the Saratoga National Historical Park.¹⁷

Through a partnership with Texas A&M University's Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism Science, a series of free podcasts was created in 2012. The podcasts feature local historical and cultural information about the areas the train is passing through on routes starting or terminating in San Antonio. For the Sunset Limited route from Los Angeles to San Antonio, there are over 50 short MP3 recordings that range from one and half minutes to four minutes in length.¹⁸

According to the National Park Service website, there are over 200 National Parks accessible by Amtrak. The Trails & Rails Program website promotes using Amtrak service to connect to National Parks, however, there is no information provided to explain how to accomplish these connections. The AmtrakVacations.com website is operated by Yankee Leisure Group, Inc., which offers packaged tours that include taking Amtrak to visit National Parks, like the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone. But there is no information on the Amtrak website itself, either for the specific route or the station, or in the Route Guide that provides information on how to get to a National Park.


Through partnerships, both Amtrak and the National Park Service are able to promote their respective services to attract new customers or visitors. Also through leveraging volunteers and other partnerships, additional programming is being created to add to their customers/visitors overall experience. This concept of using partnerships to cross promote services and create value-added travel experiences can be replicated. The use of social media to create and disseminate content is a tool that can be used to create simplistic to very sophisticated programming for this purpose.

¹⁷ Trails & Rails Program, National Park Service. List of Routes and Parks, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/amtraktrailsandrails/trains.htm>.

¹⁸ Amtrak Podcasts, <http://amtrak.adventgx.com/>

Image 6: Website with Trails & Rails Podcasts for Amtrak's Sunset Limited Route

Source: <http://amtrak.adventgx.com/>



[Return to index](#)

LAX to SAS

Sunset Limited

Podcast Description

Amtrak, the National Park Service's Trails and Rails Program, and the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences at Texas A&M University have created podcasts to enhance your travel on the Sunset Limited train between New Orleans and Los Angeles.

Instructions For Downloading and Listening to Amtrak Audio Podcasts


Podcast Intro

An Introduction to the Trails & Rails Podcast Presentation.

Summary This audio track introduces the podcast and gives the listener information about the partnership between Amtrak, the National Park Service and the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas.

Author

Published Fri. Jan 20, 2012 **Duration** 1:24




Train Intro

An Introduction to your Train.

Summary This audio track gives the listener important information about the amenities provided on Amtrak trains and general precautions regarding movement around the train and between cars. The listener should also be sure to listen to all announcements given by Amtrak officials.

Author

Published Fri. Jan 20, 2012 **Duration** 2:20




Los Angeles Yesterday & Today

A City Rich with History and Attractions.

Summary Since its founding in 1781, Los Angeles has become the second most populated city in the United States and one of the world's centers of business, trade, entertainment, culture, media, fashion, science, technology and education.

Author Written by Joel Mason and Candace Sharp (Undergraduate Students) and edited by James E. Miculka with the National Park Service based with the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences at Texas A&M University, as part of a National Park Service Trails and Rails project funded by Amtrak, 2009.

Published Fri. Jan 20, 2012 **Duration** 2:04




Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

The Largest Urban National Park.

Summary When the word largest or biggest come to mind, we often think in terms of it's bigger in Texas or maybe Alaska, but this isn't always so. The world's largest urban national park is found here in California and boasts a variety of wildlife, trails and even a movie set.

Author Written by James E. Miculka with the National Park Service based with the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences at Texas A&M University, as part of a National Park Service Trails and Rails project funded by Amtrak, 2009.

Published Fri. Jan 20, 2012 **Duration** 3:27



Promotion of the Vermonter Route & Greenfield Station

Current Promotion by Amtrak

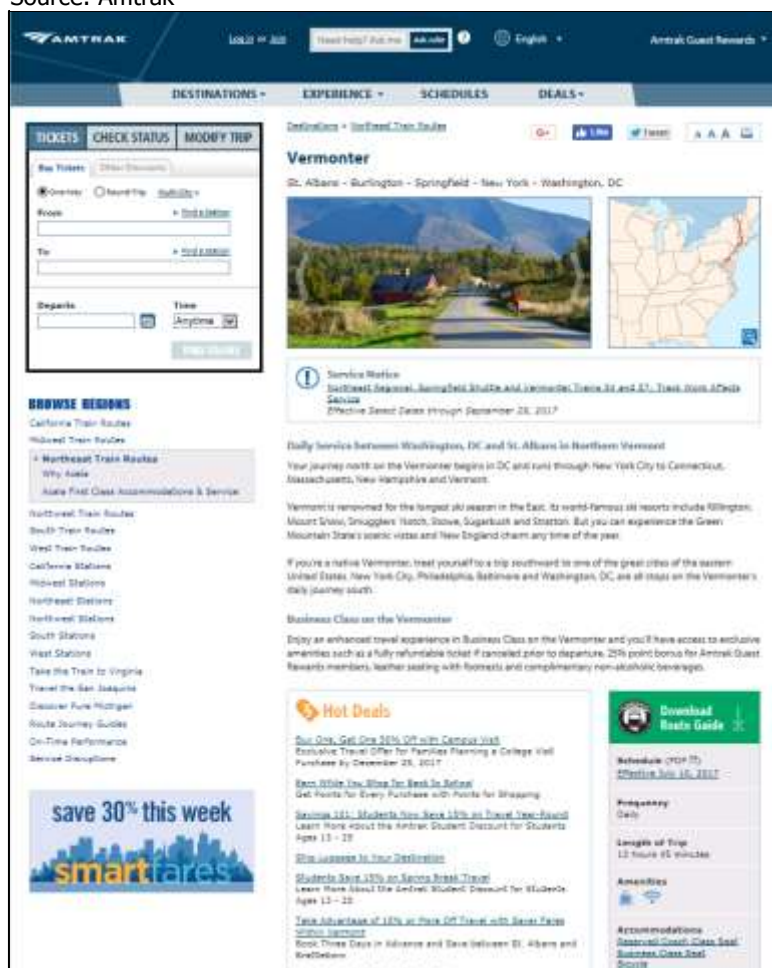
For a prospective passenger rail traveler looking for information about the Vermonter Route or Greenfield, Amtrak has the Vermonter Route webpage¹⁹, Greenfield station webpage²⁰, and the Vermonter Route Guide²¹. Tickets are available for purchase at the larger metropolitan stations or from conductors once the passenger has boarded the train. However, most riders purchase their tickets on Amtrak's website or through the Amtrak mobile app. As a result, the information provided on the website and mobile app about the destinations is an important connection for the prospective visitor.

Amtrak's webpage for the Vermonter Route includes a general description of the route, the current schedule, information about applicable services and policies, links to applicable deals or discounts, and a Route Guide that can be viewed online or downloaded in PDF format.

Given that the title of the train route is the Vermonter, it is not entirely unexpected that the focus of the daily service description is on Vermont as the primary destination. However, the description only lists Massachusetts as one of the states also served by this train route.

Image 7: Amtrak's Vermonter Route Webpage.

Source: Amtrak



¹⁹ Link: <https://www.amtrak.com/vermonter-train>

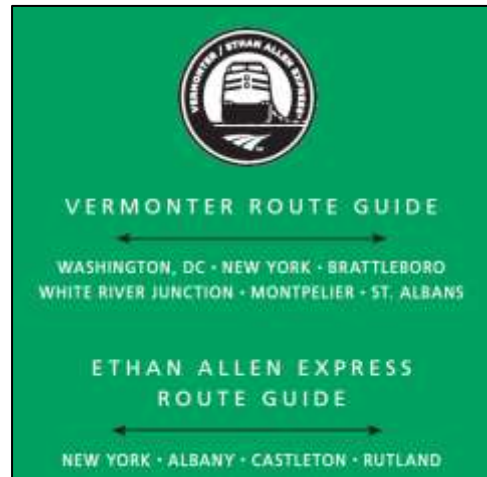
²⁰ Link: https://www.amtrak.com/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=am/am2Station/Station_Page&code=GFD

²¹ Link: <https://www.amtrak.com/ccurl/450/367/Amtrak-Ethan-Allen-Express-Vermont-Train-Route-Guide.0.pdf>

Available for viewing or download in PDF format, the Amtrak's Route Guide serves both the Vermonter and the Ethan Allen Express routes. The Route Guide is not the same as a schedule and does not include timing for passengers to embark or disembark the train. The schedules are updated frequently as needed. The purpose of the Route Guide is primarily for marketing. It describes the communities and their points of interest served by this route, as well as include some general information about the route and its history.

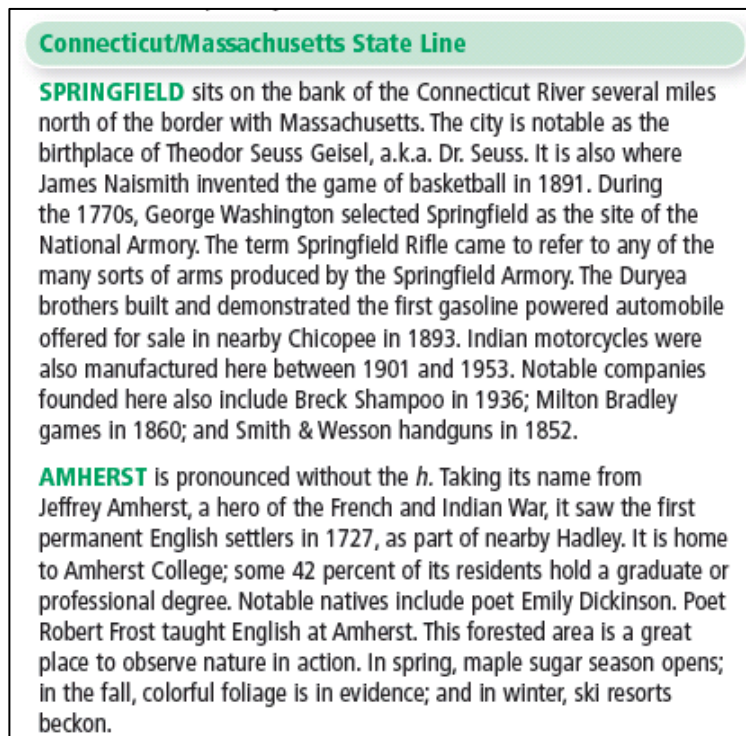
Image 8: Cover of the Vermonter and Ethan Allen Express Route Guide

Source: Amtrak



The current Vermonter and the Ethan Allen Express Route Guide posted on the Amtrak website does not appear to have a publishing date and is in need of updating. This Route Guide does not include Greenfield, Holyoke, and Northampton, which were added to the Vermonter route in 2015, and continues to include Amherst as a stop, which was discontinued in 2015.

Image 9: Vermonter Route Guide's Massachusetts Stops. Source: Amtrak



To assist with any planned update to the Route Guide, new brief summaries for Greenfield, Holyoke and Northampton could be drafted and offered to Amtrak for their consideration.

Amtrak's webpage for Greenfield, MA has general information about the station, as well as visitor information. The site features an interactive map showing the location of Greenfield Station at the John W. Olver Transit Center and includes coverages that can be turned on to show lodging, rental cars, parking, train stations, and airports in the vicinity. The practicality of the options depicted on the interactive map can vary and change each time the map is used. For example, when the icon for parking locations is selected, the results often impractical parking areas in Greenfield as well as parking options in other states. The station webpage also includes a table for the Station's features, like an enclosed waiting area and restrooms. However, the hours of operation for the John W. Olver Transit Center are not included and it does not state that the facility is not open 24 hours a day or on weekends.

The parking information provided in the table only describes the parking available at the John W. Olver Transit Center, which is limited to short-term use. To accommodate rail travelers, the Town of Greenfield has designated spots in the Hope Street municipal parking lot for overnight, long-term parking for Amtrak passenger vehicles with the purchase of a parking pass. The pass may be purchased from the Town

Treasurer in the Town Hall or by using the Town's Online Payment Center. The parking pass is \$5 per day or \$25 for a week. If purchasing the pass online, it may be printed out by the purchaser for display on the vehicle dashboard. Since construction is underway for a downtown parking structure across the street from the John W. Olver Center, the location of overnight, long term parking may change once the garage is

Image 10: Amtrak's Greenfield Station Webpage

Source: <https://www.amtrak.com/>

Greenfield, MA (GFD)

Station Building (with waiting room)
12 Olive Street
John W. Olver Transit Center
Greenfield, MA 01301

Features	Baggage	Parking	Accessibility	Hours	Routes
Enclosed Waiting Area		Restrooms		No ATM	
No Ticket Office		No Lounge		No Elevator	
No Quik-Trak kiosk		No Payphone		No Wi-Fi	
Arrival Time: with service - 45 minutes, without service - 30 minutes, prior to departure					

Indicates an accessible service.

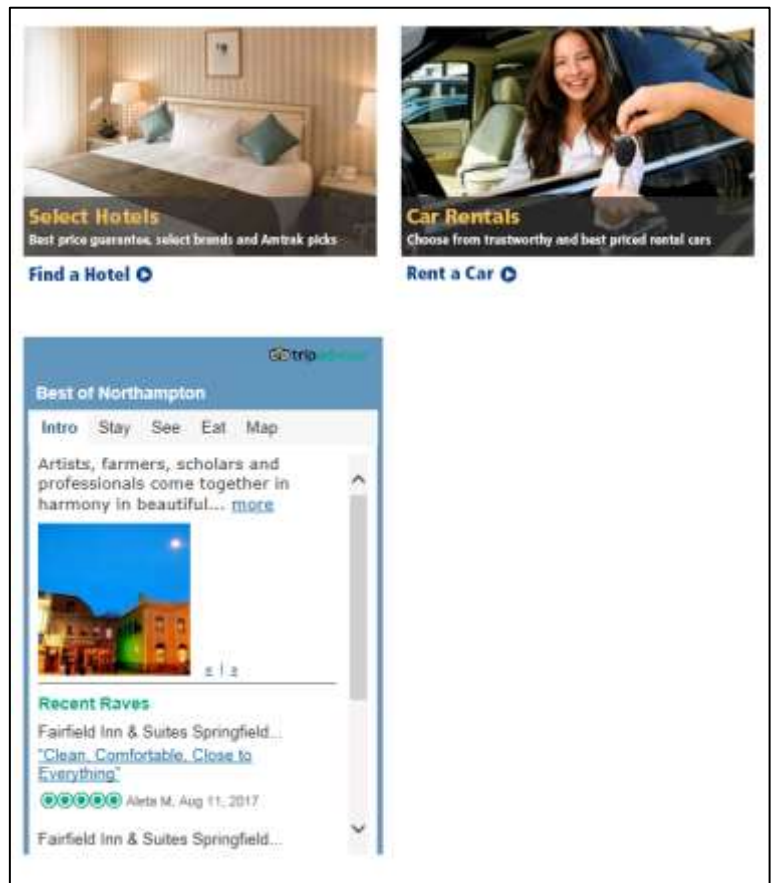
completed. A poster with this parking information is on the train station platform (see Appendix for image of poster).

The Greenfield station webpage also offers links to select hotels, to find car rentals and for other visitor information offered by Trip Advisor. The link to identify hotels near Greenfield generates a list produced by Expedia, and includes available rooms in downtown Greenfield as well as at other accommodations in the region. Through the link to Expedia, a room reservation can be made online.

When the car rental link is selected, it states “No cars were found matching your request criteria” as Powered by Expedia. While there is no car rental facility at the John W. Olver Transit Center, there is an Enterprise Car Rental office located less than one mile away at 136 River Street. This car rental office can be found on the interactive map, but not through the “Rent a Car” link. Only rental car companies located at a train station are listed through these links on the Amtrak website.

Image 11: Amtrak’s Greenfield Station Webpage

Source: <https://www.amtrak.com/>



Also on the Greenfield Station webpage is an inset to TripAdvisor for visitor information about the area. The current TripAdvisor inset features the “Best of Northampton” information and not information about Greenfield. Amtrak will be contacted to request the inset be updated to be “Best of Greenfield” from TripAdvisor.

[Transporting Bicycles and Skis to the Greenfield Station](#)

Franklin County is known as an area with great outdoor recreation opportunities, including bicycling, skiing, and kayaking. Both on-road bicycling routes and mountain bicycling facilities attract visitors to the region. There are also major bicycling events throughout the year in the region that attract thousands of participants. Fortunately, policies that allow for transporting bicycles on the Vermonter have evolved. Presently,

the Vermonter allows for unboxed bicycles to be transported and stored onboard bicycle racks found in select train cars. According to the Amtrak website, there are three spots on this rack to store bicycles on the Vermonter. Reservations for spot are required in advance²². The fee for a reserved bicycle spot is \$10 to \$20, depending on the segment the passenger is travelling. Not all train routes have bicycle spots. However, there are train routes that do have more bicycles spots per train route, such as the Downeaster with 4 spots or Amtrak Cascades (which travels from Oregon to Vancouver, British Columbia) with 10 spots. Given the outdoor recreation assets available in region, the expansion of onboard racks could be an attractive feature for bicycle enthusiasts who want to visit the region. According to a statement made by an Amtrak official at a recent meeting attend by FRCOG staff, the Vermonter carried 437 bicycles from October 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017, which they considered to be very successful.

Image 12: Departing at the Greenfield Station

Source: FRCOG, July 2017/



Skis and snowboards may also be transported either as carry-on or as checked baggage depending on the dimensions of the item. For larger items that require to be checked, a \$20 fee is charged. Information about whether skis and snowboards may be transported is not listed on the webpage for the Vermonter route, such as is for bicycles. Instead, this information is provided under the main Amtrak website and can be found using the website's search function.

[MassVacation.com Promotion of Rail Travel](#)

The Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT) is a state agency dedicated to promoting the Commonwealth as a tourism destination. The agency manages the MassVacation.com website and various campaigns to attract international and domestic travelers to Massachusetts. They also work closely with the designated Regional Tourism Councils across the Commonwealth, including the three that serve Franklin

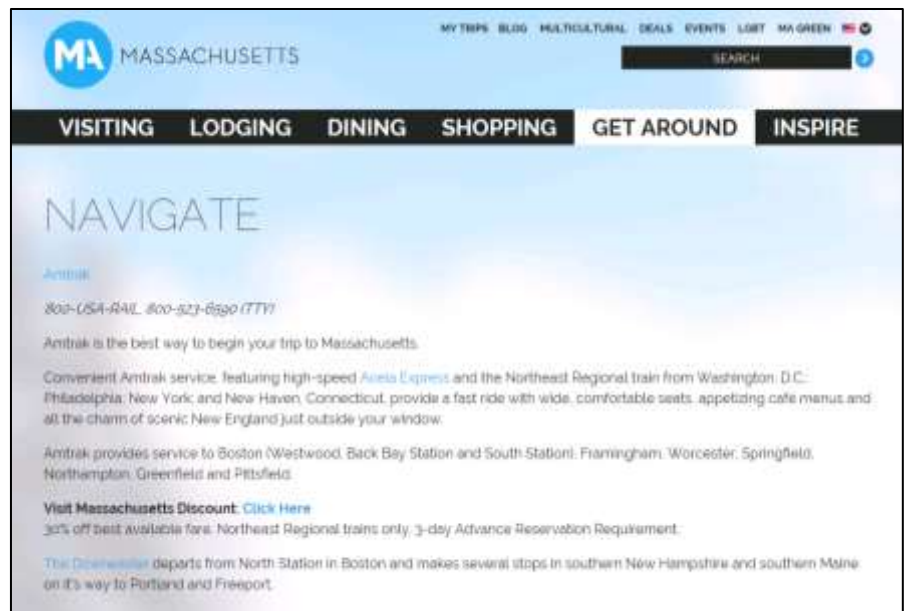
²² Source:

www.amtrak.com/servlet/ContentServer?c=AM_Accommodation_C&pagename=am%2FLayout&cid=1241210575921

County, which are the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, the Mohawk Trail Association, and the North Quabbin Chamber of Commerce.

MassVacation.com is a comprehensive website featuring information about attractions and visitor services, like lodging and dining. It also features a webpage that describes the different ways to travel to and within Massachusetts, under the “Get Around” tab. The information about transportation to Massachusetts includes information about how to travel by air, boat, train, bus and car. For traveling by train, there is general information about Amtrak’s services. The webpage mentions Amtrak’s Acela Express, Northeast Regional, and Downeaster train routes. It also features information about the Visit Massachusetts Discount for travelling to Massachusetts via the Northeast Regional or Lake Shore Limited train routes.²³ It does mention that Amtrak provides service to Greenfield and Northampton, but does not mention Holyoke or specify the Vermonter route as the manner to get to these communities.

Image 13: MassVacation.com Train Transportation Webpage.
Source: <https://www.massvacation.com/navigate/transportation/train-service/>



Local Promotion of Rail Travel

Due to the current Vermonter schedule, the average traveler will likely spend at least two nights in the region. Local lodging, attractions, and transportation companies are key businesses for prospective visitors traveling to the region by rail. The previous section reviewed how Amtrak and MassVacation.com promote rail service as an option. This section reviews how local visitor services currently promote rail service as an option. The Vermonter’s Greenfield stop is still a relatively new transportation option for the region. If the visitor is seeking to travel outside of Downtown Greenfield, an additional mode of transportation is required. For example, if a visitor wants to go to

²³ Source: <http://www.amtrak.com/VisitMA>

one of the outdoor recreation attractions in western Franklin County, they need to rent a car or arrange a private transport service or rideshare service.

To better understand the current level of promotion of traveling by rail, an inventory of local lodging accommodations, selected attractions, and transport services was undertaken. The inventory of lodging accommodations conducted for this purpose, campgrounds and most home-sharing accommodations were excluded. Only AirBNB and HomeAway accommodations were included in the inventory if they advertised through a local or state visitor association (as opposed to only advertising on their respective home-sharing service websites). Also excluded were accommodations that did not have a website or could not be confirmed as an active business. Using these parameters, 39 different locations for accommodations were identified in Franklin County.

On each website was information about the location of these accommodations and directions. Of these websites, none of them included passenger rail and the Greenfield stop as an option. However two websites used a link to an online mapping application (such as Google Maps) that provided directions that had an option to select transit as a mode of transportation. In both cases, the Vermonter was recommended for travelers going from New York City to Greenfield. Of the thirty-nine accommodations, only one is located within relative walking distance of the Greenfield Station. It is an independent bed & breakfast located a ½ mile from the station in Downtown Greenfield.

While there are many attractions and interesting things to do in Franklin County, only selected places and events were inventoried for this study. Attractions and events were included if there were a sufficient amount of activities to entertain a visitor over at least a two-day period and not require further transportation (once they arrived) to get to lodging or dining options. For the purposes of this study, 23 attractions were selected. The attractions included arts & cultural sites, a farm stay, food and music festivals, outdoor adventures, exploring small downtowns, and spiritual or meditative retreats in Franklin County. Of these twenty-three attractions, only three mentioned passenger rail service as an option for traveling to the area. They were: Historic Deerfield, the Green River Festival, and the Vipassana Meditation Center.

Both Historic Deerfield and the Green River Festival held at the Greenfield Community College campus provide a link and general information about the Amtrak service. These locations are 4 miles and 2 miles respectively from the Greenfield station. While not very far from the station, they are a greater distance than most visitors would want to walk. The Vipassana Meditation Center is located in Shelburne, which is 6 miles from

the Greenfield station and would be too far for most visitors to walk. The Vipassana Meditation Center website also includes contact information for taxi and shuttle services to connect visitors from the Greenfield station to their location.

Figure 14: Examples of Rail Information from Local Websites.

Historic Deerfield (www.historic-deerfield.org/plan-your-visit/directions-map/)

By Train

The nearest train stations are in Greenfield, MA, (4 miles from Historic Deerfield, taxi service available), Northampton, MA, Amherst, MA, or Springfield, MA. Amtrak now makes daily stops in Northampton and Greenfield on the Vermonter route. For information, contact **Amtrak**.

Green River Festival (www.greenriverfestival.com/trains-planes-busses-cars)

TRAINS

Amtrak Schedule & Information
800-872-7245 TTY: 800-523-6590
Amtrak Website: www.amtrak.com/home

The Vermonter train passes through Greenfield and many other cities—that's the train you'll want to take to get to Green River Festival. At: Albans – Burlington – Springfield – New York – Washington, D.C.
(A complete list of complete stops is below.)

The train stops twice each day in Greenfield, MA: once going North and the other going South. Please go to www.amtrak.com/home to schedule your trip.

Vipassana Meditation Center (www.dhara.dhamma.org/getting-here/)

By Train

Note: This information was accurate as of August 5, 2016.
Students and Servers need to arrive at Dhamma Dhara by 5 pm.

Greenfield Amtrak Station (GFD)
(800) USA-RAIL amtrak.com
About 15 minutes driving time from Dhamma Dhara

- 12 Olive Street, Greenfield, MA 01301
- One arrival per day. Price and schedule may vary.
- Once you arrive in Greenfield, an individual or group can take a 15 minute taxi directly to Dhamma Dhara (see taxi options below).
- It is best for students to congregate and book a taxi together to save money. You are welcome to use the ride-share board for this purpose.

Train Map

To broaden the accommodation and attraction options for visitors, transport services are necessary to connect rail passengers to these locations across the region. The types of transport options available include: intercity bus service, rental cars, taxis, private livery/shuttle services, and, to a limited degree, ridesharing.

The Greenfield Station is at the John W. Olver Transit Center, which is the hub for Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) fixed route bus services. The northbound Vermonter is scheduled to arrive at the Greenfield station at 4:22 pm. The FRTA offers at weekday service to locations in Greenfield and Montague, as well as Charlemont,

Deerfield, Orange, Shelburne Falls, Sunderland, and Whately. After 4:22 pm, visitors will have to wait from 20 minutes to over an hour and a half for the next available bus, depending on their destination. For some routes this is the last bus for the day, so if the train is delayed the visitor will need to find alternate transportation. It should also be noted that scheduled bus service is not available on weekends.

Local Transport Options

- Bus
- Rental car
- Taxi
- Private Livery/Shuttle
- Ridesharing

The Enterprise Car Rental company has an office located at 136 River Street in Downtown Greenfield, which is a little less than 1 mile from the Greenfield station. If a car is reserved, the Enterprise office in Greenfield will pick up and drop off customers at the Transit Center on Monday through Friday during the company's business hours of 8:00 am to 6:00 pm. However, on Saturdays, the office is only open from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm, which is before the northbound train arrives at 4:22 pm or the southbound train arrives at 1:35 pm. On Sundays, the office is closed. As a result, a rail traveler who is arriving or departing on a weekend will need to find alternate transportation, or will need to extend their stay to include weekday arrival and departure.

There are two taxi companies that serve the Greenfield station. They are About Town Taxi based in Greenfield and Taxi Express based in Amherst. There is a reserved parking space for a taxi in the short-term parking lot of the John W. Olver Transit Center. However, it is not a taxi stand that has taxis waiting. Both taxi services must be contacted to arrange for transportation. About Town Taxi has a telephone number but no website to request pick up online or for information about the hours of operation. Taxi Express has a website with information about its operations and rates, and allows for booking online. While not based in Franklin County, Express Taxi is identified by the Vipassana Meditation Center to schedule transport from the Greenfield station to their location in Shelburne.

There is one private livery service company based in Franklin County. Deerfield Car & Shuttle Service LLC provides local and long distance transportation, such as to Boston, New York City and other places. The company has a website with information about its operations and rates. Prospective customers can request a cost estimate for a trip through an online form. This service is used by people traveling to the Vipassana Meditation Center, the private schools in the area, and selected Bed & Breakfasts and other accommodations

Ridesharing services, like Uber and Lyft, are growing in popularity in cities around the country. Both Uber and Lyft serve Western Massachusetts. However, this is a large service area, with Franklin County having the lowest population density. While there frequency of available drivers to transport people in the Greenfield area is .

Another type of sharing-economy transportation service is Zipcar, a car sharing service. As opposed to owning a car or renting a car, Zipcar requires users to be a member of their service which allows them access to a Zipcar. A member must reserve the use of a Zipcar vehicle in advance and pick it up from where it is based. There are no Zipcar vehicles based in Greenfield.

An understanding of the limitations of local transportation options and planning in advance are important for ensuring that rail visitors can seamlessly connect to lodging and attractions in Franklin County. This effort could take the form of simply sharing key transportation information on websites with companies coordinating their respective services and developing packaged itineraries.

Findings

Scheduled passenger rail service on the Vermonter returned to Greenfield in 2015. Since its launch, ridership at the Greenfield Station has grown. The passengers using this station include people who may select Greenfield because it is a closer option than other stations, as well as people who may not have considered using passenger rail for their transportation previously because there was no close option. It is anticipated that the use of the Greenfield Station will continue to increase in the years to come, as efforts are underway to reduce overall trip time and offer more travel options.

Currently, the top three destinations on the Vermonter route for passengers leaving New York City are not other urban metropolitan areas, but communities known as tourist destinations and/or college areas in Massachusetts and Vermont. Franklin County has similar attractions and a quintessential rural New England landscape that may also attract tourists from an urban area, if these assets were more broadly known.

Domestic travel for leisure is increasing nationally, but only a small percentage of travelers choose to take the train (as opposed to driving their own vehicle or air travel). Studies of generational preferences for transportation modes and for leisure travel may support rail as an appealing option. One study highlighted Millennials' openness to different modes of transportation. They also prefer having technology to access

transportation information quickly and in an entertaining way, and to easily make transactions (i.e. purchase tickets, make reservations). Another study highlighted the Baby Boomers' preference for affordable travel experiences that allow them to relax with friends and family and also broaden their horizons.

The current structure that promotes Franklin County as a tourist destination includes three regional tourism councils as well as other business and community groups. Two of these regional tourism councils actively market the region to the metropolitan New York area. Most tourists to Franklin County are typically single day visitors or stop on the way to another destination. Tourists coming to the region by passenger rail would stay longer than the typical day-trippers due to the current train schedule requiring an overnight stay. It is likely that most tourists traveling by rail would want to stay at least two nights, so as to have more than a twenty-hour timeframe to be in the region. As a result, visitors traveling by rail will likely spend more money locally than traditional day-trippers traveling by car.

Not only will increased use of the passenger rail system benefit the local tourism economy, there are other potential benefits. It may also support further investment in the rail system, which could expand service offerings or eventually reduce the operating subsidy required by contributing state governments. Also, by visitors taking the train, as opposed to their own vehicles, it reduces the negative impacts associated with traffic congestion.

There are examples of successful programs that encourage tourists to travel by rail to rural destinations. State government -led programs, such as in Maine and Vermont, have created user friendly, online platforms to easily inform prospective tourists about the rail option and the destinations they can visit. It is important to note that this information is specific to the host community where the station is located, and is not just a general statement about rail travel to the state. There are also examples of programs that leverage partnerships to connect and cross-promote opportunities. Two public transit authorities in the Albuquerque-Sante Fe region work cooperatively to connect people in the metropolitan area to rural outdoor recreation opportunities. A partnership between Amtrak and the National Park Service allows these organizations to cross promote their services and attractions to their respective customer base, and expand their programming by using volunteers and working with a university. These examples serve as an inspiration for exploring prospective partnerships to promote Greenfield and the other Vermonter stations in Massachusetts.

This report researched the current promotion of rail service to the Greenfield Station by Amtrak, the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism's MassVacation.com website, and by local businesses and organizations. In each of these areas, there could be improvements to enhance the visibility of the Vermonter rail service and/or Greenfield Station. Such improvements could range from simple corrections and updated content to the implementation of a more sophisticated promotional effort.

In addition to the schedule, fares, online ticket reservation function, and basic description of the Vermonter service and Greenfield station, the Amtrak.com website includes information about the station's host community and nearby traveler services (i.e. parking, rental cars, lodging, etc.). Unfortunately, some of the information provided has not been updated or is not as helpful as it could be. The structure of the station webpage also has some challenges. There is an interactive map that features information for parking, rental cars, lodgings, and other items. However, the practicality of the options depicted on the interactive map can vary and change each time the map is used.

At the State level, the MassVacation.com website has a section about rail travel to the state but offers very limited information about traveling to areas outside of Boston. At the local level, there are very few instances when lodging, attractions, or other entities serving the tourism industry mention traveling by rail as an option to get to Greenfield or other areas of Franklin County. Of the 39 different accommodations identified in Franklin County, none identified travel by rail as an option on their website. Two of the accommodations' websites used an online mapping function (such as Google maps), which included using rail as a transportation option. Twenty-three locations or attractions (that a tourist may visit for at least a two-day period of time) were identified in Franklin County. A review of their respective websites found three attractions provided information about rail as a travel option. A significant challenge for those arriving in Greenfield by rail and wanting to connect to lodging or attractions outside of the downtown area is accessing local transportation.

Local transportation options in Franklin County are available but have limitations. The Greenfield station is located at the John W. Olver Transit Center, which is the hub for fixed route bus service provided by the Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA). There is limited bus service in the evenings and no weekend service. Depending on when the traveler arrives and where they need to go, the fixed bus route may not be an option. There is an Enterprise Rental Car office in Greenfield located less than 1 mile from the Greenfield station. The company will pick up or drop off customers at the

Greenfield station on Monday through Friday. Unfortunately, the Enterprise office closes before the train arrives on Saturdays and is closed on Sundays.

There are two taxi companies that serve the Greenfield station, one based in Greenfield and one based in Amherst. There is one private livery service company based in Franklin County that serves Greenfield station as well. Ride-sharing companies, such as Uber and Lyft, offer their services for Western Massachusetts. With this large service area, the frequency of available drivers to transport people in the Greenfield area is not known. For each of these service providers, travelers will need to contact them directly to arrange for transportation and may need to do so in advance of arriving at the Greenfield station.

In short, successfully attracting more tourists to the region via rail requires the following:

- Facilitate local transportation options to connect people from the Greenfield station to accommodations and attractions.
- Promote passenger rail service as an option for visitors traveling to the region, at the state and local level.
- Continue to promote Franklin County and its assets as a destination for metropolitan-based tourists who live on the Vermonter route and who are seeking a vacation get-a-way.

Recommendations

Based on the research and findings of this report, key recommendations and next steps have been identified. These range from very simple, no cost solutions to more expansive efforts that require further research to determine their feasibility and effectiveness. As part of the 2018 Franklin Region Unified Planning Work Program, FRCOG staff will implement these recommendations. Please note that recommendations are grouped according to task and are not in prioritized order.

Task A. Request Amtrak to update its webpage for the Vermonter route as follows:

- Update its Daily Service description to include applicable New England states, not just Vermont.
- Update its Vermonter Route Guide to include Greenfield, Northampton, and Holyoke stations, and remove the Amherst station.

Task B. Request Amtrak to update its webpage for the Greenfield Station as follows:

- Insert an updated Trip Advisor inset for the Greenfield area.
- Include in their description of parking information about the Town of Greenfield overnight parking location and policies.
- Add information about the Enterprise Car Rental office in Greenfield, even though it is not located on site at the Greenfield station.

Task C. Coordinate with Northampton, Holyoke, and Springfield tourism industry leaders to explore the following activities at the state level:

- Explore what it would take to launch a program similar to the AmtrakDowneaster.com for the Vermonter.
- Inquire if a vendor, such as AmtrakDowneaster.com's vendor NATraveler.com, would be interested in assembling tour packages for western Massachusetts.
- Work with the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT) to expand the description of rail service to Massachusetts on MassVacation.com.
- Explore if the "Visit Mass Discount" for Amtrak fares to Massachusetts offered through MassVacation.com can be expanded to include a discount on Vermonter fares.

Task D. Develop partnerships and materials to support the local tourism industry in promoting travel by rail.

- Create materials that provide easy to understand information about the Greenfield station, overnight parking, and local transportation options for both visitors to the region and area residents seeking to use the train.
- Provide Greenfield station materials to local tourism groups, chambers of commerce, and/or business associations to include on their websites and to share with their respective tourism industry members.
- Provide information about the Vermonter and Greenfield station to lodging/accommodations and attractions in the region.
- Facilitate connections among interested accommodations and attractions with local transport providers.
- Explore if local tourism groups, chambers of commerce, and/or business associations would be interested in developing suggested itineraries that focuses on visiting by rail.

At the conclusion of the 2018 Franklin Region Unified Planning Work Program, FRCOG staff will report on the outcomes of these efforts.

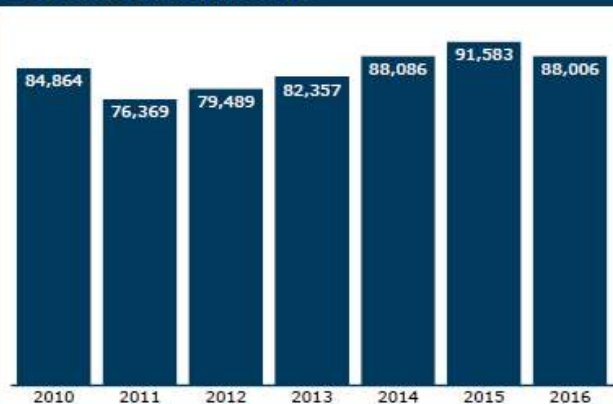
Appendix

- Amtrak fact sheet: Vermonter Service
- Amtrak service in Greenfield, MA
- FRCOG's Greenfield Station Platform Poster

Amtrak fact sheet: Vermont service

4

Passengers, 2010-2016



Quick recap, 2016

	Coach	Business	Total
Passengers	80,904	7,102	88,006
Average trip	255 miles	290 miles	258 miles

Top city pairs by ridership, 2016

1. New York, NY - Northampton, MA	156 mi
2. Brattleboro, VT - New York, NY	199 mi
3. Essex Jct., VT - New York, NY	356 mi
4. New York, NY - White River Jct., VT	262 mi
5. Montpelier, VT - New York, NY	324 mi
6. Greenfield, MA - New York, NY	175 mi
7. New York, NY - Waterbury-Stowe, VT	333 mi
8. Brattleboro, VT - Essex Jct., VT	157 mi
9. Northampton, MA - Philadelphia, PA	247 mi
10. Bellows Falls, VT - New York, NY	223 mi

Top city pairs by revenue, 2016

1. New York, NY - Northampton, MA	156 mi
2. Brattleboro, VT - New York, NY	199 mi
3. Essex Jct., VT - New York, NY	356 mi
4. New York, NY - White River Jct., VT	262 mi
5. Montpelier, VT - New York, NY	324 mi
6. Northampton, MA - Philadelphia, PA	247 mi
7. Essex Jct., VT - Washington, DC	582 mi
8. Greenfield, MA - New York, NY	175 mi
9. Washington, DC - White River Jct., VT	488 mi
10. New York, NY - Waterbury-Stowe, VT	333 mi

At a glance

Part of Amtrak's State Supported sector

Daily service: 32 cities in 9 states+ DC

Population of service area

Within 25 miles: 33,839,392

Within 50 miles: 42,568,380

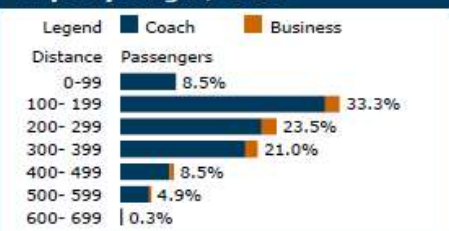
Longest segment traveled: 606 miles

St. Albans, VT - Washington, DC

Service notes

Reroute in western MA, 12/28/2014

Trips by length, 2016



Activity by station

	2014	2015	2016
Amherst	13,780	4,161	
Baltimore	1,749	1,962	1,876
BWI Airport	1,044	917	861
Bellows Falls	5,399	4,749	4,466
Berlin [Kensington]	316	344	306
Brattleboro	19,835	18,580	16,000
Bridgeport	1,419	1,334	1,213
Claremont	2,117	2,117	2,474
Essex Jct.	21,400	21,022	18,628
Greenfield		5,315	5,885
Hartford	2,500	2,632	2,614
Holyoke		25	1,203
Meriden	564	494	408
Metropark	404	335	310
Montpelier	8,504	8,723	7,667
New Carrollton	641	558	599
New Haven	4,105	4,515	4,631
New York	33,666	38,157	37,680
Newark	1,989	1,806	1,839
Northampton		11,917	17,197
Philadelphia	7,555	7,559	7,995
Randolph	2,302	2,072	1,940
St. Albans	4,401	4,062	3,355
Springfield	4,136	3,715	2,865
Stamford	2,686	2,769	2,563
Trenton	1,520	1,534	1,545
Wallingford	371	367	409
Washington	8,370	7,812	7,322
Waterbury-Stowe	6,106	5,837	5,331
White River Jct.	15,983	14,540	13,717
Wilmington	1,729	1,630	1,527
Windsor Locks	384	398	421
Windsor--Mt. Ascutney	1,197	1,208	1,165



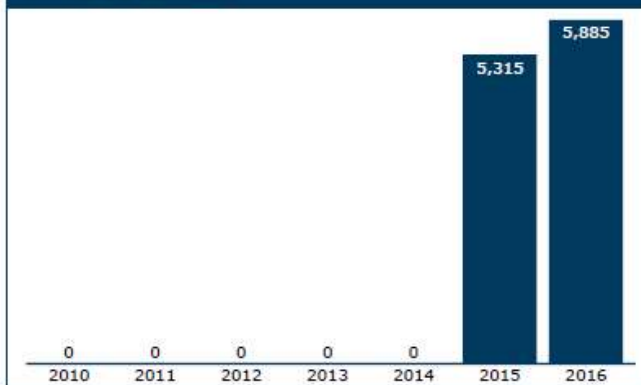
505 Capitol Ct NE #300
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 408-8362
www.narprail.org

Copyright 2017 National Association of Railroad Passengers

Amtrak service in Greenfield, MA

GFD

Passengers using this station, 2010-2016 (arrivals and departures)



Quick recap, 2016 (arrivals and departures)

	Coach/ Business	First/ Sleepers	Total
Passengers	5,885		5,885
Average trip	176 miles	n/a	176 miles

Top city pairs by ridership, 2016

1. New York, NY	175 mi
2. Northampton, MA	19 mi
3. Philadelphia, PA	266 mi
4. Washington, DC	401 mi
5. Essex Jct., VT	181 mi
6. New Haven, CT	104 mi
7. Springfield, MA	46 mi
8. Newark, NJ	186 mi
9. White River Jct., VT	87 mi
10. Wilmington, DE	292 mi

Top city pairs by revenue, 2016

1. New York, NY	175 mi
2. Washington, DC	401 mi
3. Philadelphia, PA	266 mi
4. Essex Jct., VT	181 mi
5. Wilmington, DE	292 mi
6. Baltimore, MD	360 mi
7. Newark, NJ	186 mi
8. Trenton, NJ	233 mi
9. New Haven, CT	104 mi
10. Stamford, CT	140 mi

John W. Olver Transit Center

12 Olive St.
Greenfield, MA 01301-3351

Population served by this station

Within 25 miles: 286,173
Within 50 miles: 1,838,414

2nd congressional district

McGovern MA02 (James)
D

Current Amtrak presence

State Supported: 5,885
Vermont: Daily service

Service notes

Service began 12/19/2014

Trips by length, 2016



Copyright 2017 National Association of Railroad Passengers

505 Capitol Ct NE #300
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 408-8362
www.narprail.org

Welcome to Greenfield



FAQ about the Greenfield Train Stop

Welcome to the John W. Oliver Transit Center at 12 Olive Street, Greenfield, MA! Opened in 2012, it is the first zero-net energy transit center in the country and serves as the public transit hub for Franklin County.

Can I wait inside? Are there public bathrooms?

The John W. Oliver Transit Center is open to the public, and has a lobby area, public bathrooms, cell phone charging stations, and small café. The lobby is open Monday - Friday from 7:00 am - 7:00 pm, and Club Café is open Monday - Friday from 8:00 am - 1:30 pm. The Center is closed on weekends.

Where can I park overnight while I'm on my trip?

The Town of Greenfield has designated an area of the Hope Street municipal parking lot for overnight and long-term parking, with the purchase of a parking pass. See map for location of overnight parking. The pass may be purchased online or from the Town Treasurer/Collector's Office at the Town Hall, 1st Floor, 14 Court Square, from Monday - Friday from 8:30 am - 5:00 pm. To purchase the pass online go to www.greenfield-ma.gov/p/629/Amtrak-Parking-Passes. Once purchased, the pass must be printed out and displayed on the vehicle dashboard.

What other transportation options can I connect to?

Local & Regional Bus Service. The Center is a hub for local and regional bus service. Here schedule information is posted and tickets may be purchased on the bus, online or from the Franklin Regional Transit Authority 1st floor ticket booth (Monday - Friday 8:00 am - 12:00 pm) or 2nd floor office (Monday - Friday from 8:00 am - 4:00 pm).

Franklin Regional Transit Authority: 413-774-2262 or go to www.frtc.org

Peter Pan Bus Lines: 800-343-9999 or go to www.peterpanbus.com

GREYHOUND: Greyhound 800-231-2222 or go to www.greyhound.com

Rental Car Companies

Enterprise: Enterprise Rent-A-Car: 413-225-1012 or go to www.enterprise.com

Taxi Cab Companies

About Town Taxi: 413-774-4000

Where can I find information about places to stay or eat, or things to do while visiting?

Check out the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce at www.franklincc.org or call them at 413-773-5463, or visit them at 395 Main Street, in Downtown Greenfield from Monday - Friday from 8:30 am - 4:30 pm - it's a five minute walk from here!

Views of Franklin County, Massachusetts



Plover's Bell Tower in Greenfield



Bridge of Flowers in Shelburne Falls



Peace Pigeons in Leverett



Energy Park Conservatory in Downtown Greenfield



Kayaking on the Deerfield River



Ashby House in Haverhill



View from Mt. Sugarloaf in South Greenfield



Peace Statue and Memorial Park in Downtown Orange